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THREE NOTES ON THE MEDEA

I

Euripides, *Medea*, 625-6

ννμφεν * ἴσως γάρ, συν θεῷ <5᾽εἰρήσεται,
γο.μεῖς τοιοῦτον ὥστε σ᾽ ἀρνεῖσθαι γάμον.

Méridier translates line 626 «tel sera ton hymen que tu le désavoueras»; and Page accepts this, remarking that ἀρνεῖσθαι can mean either «renounce» or «disown». But this, if strictly understood, gives a quite inappropriate sense to Medea's threat. When Glauce is dead, how can Jason «disavow», «renounce», or «disown» his marriage to her, which is common knowledge? And if he could, what would he gain by it ? Medea might indeed say «You will live to *repent* your marriage», and so the scholiast paraphrases her words (ὥστε μεταμεληθῆναι σε ἐπὶ τῷ γάμῳ); but ἀρνεῖσθαι cannot mean «repent». Verrall tried to make sense of the line by taking γαμεῖς as a future and γάμον, «wedding», as describing «by way of mockery» Medea's coming act of vengeance. But this seems too obscure, especially since the wedding has already taken place (as appears from lines 19, 694, 877, 1001, 1137, 1177, etc.).

I incline to believe that Euripides gave his heroine a more effective «curtain line» than this. And in fact a number of nineteenth-century scholars thought σ ἀρνεῖσθαι corrupt. But of the emendations they proposed only Rost's σ ἀρκεῖσθαι combines a tolerable sense with transcriptional probability; and the passive use of ἀρκεῖν unfortunately appears to be foreign to fifth-century Attic. I suggest θ ρ ῆ ν ε ῖ σ θ α ι, which could have been corrupted through the intrusion of a gloss σε, intended to show that the verb is middle, or merely by confusion of Θ with C. A dirge in place of a marriage-song symbolises the completest reversal of fortune : cf. *Ale.* 922 ννν <5᾽υμεναίων γόος ἀντίπαλος, and

Aesch., *Agam.* 702-12. And the prophecy fits the sequel: first Creon will utter a *θρήνος* (1211), then Jason (1409); and when the spectators hear Medea's cry, *ονπω θρηνεῖς- μένε και γήρας* (1396), some of them will recall her earlier words. In view of these passages, if *θρηνεῖσθαι* is read at 626 it is perhaps best taken as middle (cf. Aesch. *P.V.* 43, Soph. *Aj.* 852) with no specified subject — «a marriage that will bring dirges».

II

1067-70

ἀλλ' εἴμι γὰρ δη τλημονεστάτην οδόν,
καὶ τοῦσδε πέμψω τλημονεστέραν ἐτι,
παῖδας προσειπεῖν βούλομαι. δότ' ὦ τέκνα,
δότ' ἀσπάσασθαι μητρὶ δεξιάν χέρα.

At line 1053 Medea ordered her children into the house (*χωρεῖτε, παῖδες, ες δόμον*) and we must surely assume, *pace* Professor Page(1), that the order was obeyed. How, then, do they come to be on the stage at 1070 ? Do they enter «a servis vocati Medae iussu» (Murray) ? But the Paedagogus was sent indoors at 1019, and there can be no slaves on the stage to overhear lines 1059-68, in which Medea plainly admits one murder and almost as plainly promises another. Are we then to suppose that, having uttered line 1068 *sotto voce*, Medea turns and shouts the last words of her sentence through the palace doors, after which she waits to finish line 1069 until the children come out ? This seems intolerable: apart from the awkwardness of the action in terms of the stage, the words *παῖδας προσειπεῖν βούλομαι* are no instruction to invisible slaves, but an integral part of her soliloquy. But why, then, do the children return at this point? Méridier's explanation, «elle fait signe vers la maison», is inadequate : tragic convention requires something more explicit. And while Grube (*The Drama of Euripides* p. 160 n. 1) has done good service in pointing out the difficulties involved in the common assumption, I cannot accept his strange

(1) In his note on line 894 Page allows them to leave at 1053 (misprinted 1063), and points out the dramatic effectiveness of their frequent exits and re-entrances. But in his note on 1053, impressed by the awkwardness of Murray's arrangement he changes his mind.

theory that what returns is not the children at all, but a hallucination.

I think the truth is simpler. I suggest that, her soliloquy ended, her resolution at last firm, Medea *summons the children herself*:

ὁ δ ν τ \ ὡ τέκνα"
δὸτ ασπάσασθαι μητρι δεζιάν χέρα.

If this elementary correction was not proposed long ago, the reason must, I suppose, lie in hesitation about the tragic status of *δεῦτε*, or else about the rhythm. But no qualms need be felt on either score,

(a) Medea has already said *δεῦτε* to her children at 894, and Elmsley would scarcely have altered it there to *δεῦρο* (thus incurring Hermann's disapproval) had he known that *δεῦτε* would turn up in the *Dictyulci* (P.S.I. 1209 = Mette, *Suppl. Aesch.* fr. 178) and (less certainly) in the *Ichneutae* (line 176). These are satyr-plays, it is true. But in the fifth century the word was not yet a colloquialism, else we should expect to encounter it in Aristophanes or Plato; it was an old-fashioned epicism, which tragedy could use if the satyr-play could. *δεῦτ, ὡ τέκνα*, in Pompeius Macer fr. 1. 1 (Nauck, T.G.F². p. 831) may be an echo of the present passage, (b) As to the rhythm, a long monosyllable or elided trochaic word before the final cretic is quite common in Euripides (Descroix, *Trimetre !ambique* 328), and even Sophocles could end a line with *δεῦρ Ἰκόμην* (*O. T.* 318).

III (1)

1255-7

f σας γάρ από χρυσέας γόνας

εἴλασεν, θεοῦ δ' αἶμα τι πίτνειν |
 φόξος νη ἀνέρων.

1265-7

| δειλαία, τί σοι φρένων βαρύς

χόλος προσπίτνει και δυσμενής f
 φόνος ἀμείζεται;

1256 θεών B¹ L αἶμα τι A : αἶμα ι BV : αἶμα LP : εντετλα 77⁵
 secundum Page («ganz unsicher» Snell)

(1) In this note I am indebted to Mr. W. S. Barrett for valuable criticism.

1265 δειλαία, τί] ἀλλὰ δη τάδε τι *IP*⁵ ut vid.

1266 πιτνει 77⁵

«

1267 ἀμειρεται φόνοϛ *P*

In this notorious double crux, apart from the defective respon-
sion of 1255 to 1265, which is most easily mended by Seidler's <τας>
σας, the main difficulties are two:

(a) that in 1256 neither *αἶμα τι* (A) nor *αἶματι* (VB) makes any
acceptable sense, while *αἶμα* (LP), which does make sense, destroys
the responson, such as it is (1) ;

(b) that in 1266-7 *ἀμείζεται* lacks an object.

For both problems Hermann's divination put conjecture on the
right track (which recent editors have firmly abandoned (2)) : he con-
cluded from (a) «syllabam τι alius vocabuli vestigia continere»; and
he saw that in (b), since *two* murders are in question, the missing object
is almost certainly *φόνον*. Euripides could never resist a doubled
φόνος: I have counted in his works no fewer than eleven of them. Clo-
sely parallel to the present passage are *El.* 1093 *ἀμείπεται φόνον*
δικάζων φόνος, *Or.* 816 *φόνω φόνος εξαμείζων*, and *ibid.* 1007 *τώνδε*
τάμειζει θανάτων θανάτων. From these observations it follows that
the iambic metra at the end of 1256 and 1266 must be expanded,
almost certainly to dochmii. This can be (and has been) done in
various ways, but we must choose one which accounts for the corruption.

In 1266 we have only to combine Hermann's <φόνον> with Por-
son's *ζαμενής* and read

δειλαία, τί σοι φρένων βαρύς
χόλος προσπίτνει καὶ ζαμενής * <φόνον>
φόνος ἀμείζεται.

(1) Responson of dactyl to spondee (*αἶματι* = *καὶ δυο-*) is decidedly rare in
lyric iambics. Denniston could find only four instances («Lyric Iambics in Greek
Drama», in *Greek Poetry and Life, essays presented to Gilbert Murray*, p. 142).

(2) While Page's note contains as usual much that is sound and valuable,
I am not convinced either (a) by his suggestion that *αἶμα* is a gloss on a supposed
reading *γενέθλαν* or (b) by his supplement in 1266. (a) Far from being a glosswri-
ter's word in this context, *αἶμα* has itself to be glossed here by *το γένος* (VB), *αἶματι*
by *ἀντί τον γένει* (B). (b) That a wild pre-Alexandrine papyrus inserts a meaning-
less *τάδε* in a different place is surely a weak ground for supplying one here.

This way of reading 1266 was arrived at by Weil in his second edition, save that he put the question-mark after *αμείζεται* and construed *ζαμενής* with *φόνος*. That is a possible punctuation, but I incline on balance to prefer the other. Of the eleven Euripidean phrases with doubled *φόνος*, ten are bare of any adjectival decoration, and none is wanted here. On the other hand, not only does *ζαμενή χόλον* occur in later Greek poetry (Oppian, *Cyneg.* 3. 448) but, what matters more, Pindar had already called Medea *Αλήτα...ζαμενής παῖς* (*Pyth.* 4. 11), and *ζαμενής* is in fact the *mot juste* for her daemonic fury — she is «filled with excessive *μένος*». If my punctuation is correct, the reason why «murder succeeds (1) murder» is given in the words, which follow, *χαλεπά γάρ βροτοῖς ομογενή μιάσματα*, where I think the Chorus have in mind as the source of evil the murder of Apsyrtus (which Medea had admitted in their hearing at 167). The allusion may be thought obscure; but it appears to be already implicit in their reference to *άλάστορες* at 1260.

Whichever punctuation is preferred, I feel little doubt that *ζαμενής* is right. The only other occurrence of the word in tragedy is at *Ajax* 137, and there we find it glossed *δυσμενής*. If it was so glossed here, and if *φόνον* fell out before *φόνος* — no very extravagant suppositions — then this part of the puzzle is solved.

I suggest that in line 1256 the solution may be even simpler.

I would read

<τας> σας γάρ απο χρυσέας γόνας
εξλασταν, θεοῦ δ' αἶμα <μ ά τ α ν> πίντειν
φόξος νπ άνέρων.

When *μάταν* became *rav* by haplography, this senseless remnant was altered to *n* in the archetype of the first family, and discarded altogether in the archetype of the second, *μάταν* recurs in 1261 and 1262; it may be called the keyword of this song, which expresses the

(1) Or «is succeeded by» (Weil, third edition). As *αμείζω* can mean «I receive in exchange» or «I give in exchange», so apparently *αμείζεται* can be *either* «is received in exchange for», i. e. «succeeds» or «requites» (cf. *Eur. El.* 1093), *or* «is given in exchange for», i. e. «is succeeded by» (cf. *Rhes*, 615, *Cyclops* 312). It matters little which sense we assume here.

Chorus's horror at the meaningless waste that Medea is making of her life. As Linforth has observed (1), the word is regularly applied in tragedy to «conduct or speech or events which are regarded as without sense or meaning in their context».

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(1) «Religion and Drama in Oedipus at Colonus'», *Univ. of Calif Publ. in Class. Philology* vol. 14 (1951) 188.